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# The Birthday Wish





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**G**ood night, my loves" Duchess said. Her tail swished softly as she gave each of her kittens--Berlioz, Toulouse, and Marie-a tender nuzzle.

"Sleep tight, kiddos," O'Malley said as he tucked them in.

Berlioz and Toulouse purred happily, but Marie didn't want to go to bed. "Please may I go to the party tonight?" she asked. "I promise to be very good!"







Duchess smiled and shook her head. "Scat Cat will have other birthday parties you can go to when you're older. For now, you need a good night's sleep."

Duchess and O'Malley left and shut the door quietly behind them. Marie listened as Berlioz began to snore softly. Then 'Toulouse's whiskers began twitching. Soon both her brothers were fast asleep.

But Marie was wide awake.





Voices drifted from downstairs, then music. Duchess and O'Malley were throwing a birthday party for their friend Scat Cat. He was a jazz musician who had helped Duchess and the kittens when they were separated from their owner.

Marie sighed. Oh, how she wished she were allowed to join them! Why, Scat Cat was her friend, too. It wasn't fair! After all, Marie could laugh and dance and sing as well as any grown-up.



'That's it! Marie thought. She could sneak into the party if she looked like an adult. Tiptoeing carefully, she made her way down the stairs. The coat closet would be full of things she could use to disguise herself!

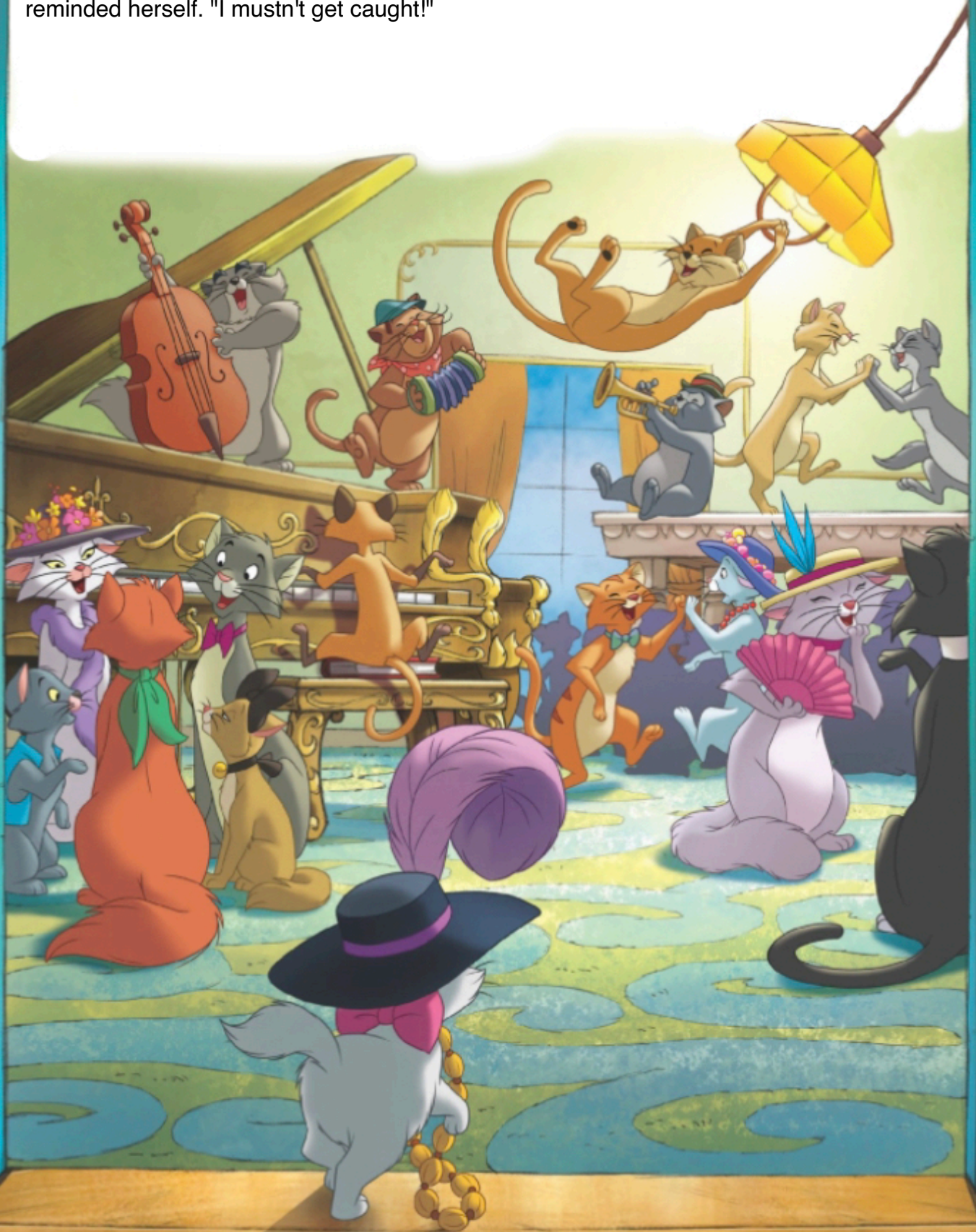
The noise from the ballroom became louder as Marie slipped into the dark closet. She rummaged around, trying things on. The feather boa tickled her nose. The frilly bonnet wasn't glamorous enough for a party. The dark glasses made it impossible for Marie to see anything. Finally, she found the perfect disguise. Marie thought she looked very grown-up





Marie crept into the parlor and looked around. Scat Cat was leading the band in a fast-paced jazz number. Duchess and O'Malley were chatting with some cats in the corner. But most of the cats were dancing. They danced on the floor, on tables--there was even a cat swinging from the chandelier!

Marie wanted to dance, too. "But I have to stay quiet," she reminded herself. "I mustn't get caught!"







"This is a beautiful house," someone said. Marie turned around to see a lady cat wearing a sparkly collar. She was talking to Marie!  
"Thank you," Marie said. Then she slapped a paw over her mouth. She was in disguise as a guest. No one could know this was her house!  
'I mean,' Marie added in a hurry, "I think so, too."

The lady cat gave Marie a funny look. Marie decided to change the subject, fast.

"I like your collar," she said.

"I like your hat," the cat said. Marie beamed. It was working! Her disguise was perfect."







“Nearby, a cat in an apron appeared, carrying a large platter. “Who wants tuna ice cream?” he said.

“I do! I do!” Marie raised her hand and jumped up and down. Then she remembered—she was supposed to act like a grown-up tonight!

The aproned cat handed her a bowl. “Thank you very much, young fellow,” Marie said in her best adult voice. As she tasted the ice cream, she purred loudly. Tuna was her favorite!”



Later, some of the guests played party games. Marie enjoyed the charades, but Pin the Tail on the Doggie was her favorite. She won every round!







“As Marie removed her blindfold, the band started playing a new tune. Scat Cat put his trumpet down.

“You’re on your own, fellas!” he said to the band. “This birthday cat has got a date with the dance floor.” Scat Cat walked over to Marie. “Ma’am,” he said with a wink, “may I have this dance?”



Marie forgot all about getting in trouble. She put her little paw in his, and Scat Cat led her out onto the dance floor.

"Enjoying the party, Marie?" Scat Cat asked.

"Oh, yes!" Marie replied. Then she gasped. "I mean . . . who's Marie?" she asked, trying to cover up her mistake.

"Don't worry. Your secret is safe with me," Scat Cat said.  
"Let's just dance!"







The music swelled, and Marie took Scat Cat's advice. She swayed, bopped, and jumped to the beat. Then, as the piano trilled, Scat Cat spun her around like a top. Marie whirled—and her disguise went flying off!



“Marie!”

The music stopped, and everyone stared. Marie’s disguise was gone, and her mother was marching right toward her!

“Young lady, you are supposed to be in bed!” Duchess said.

Marie looked up sadly. “I’m sorry, Mama,” she said. “I didn’t mean to disappoint you.” Marie felt terrible for making her mother angry.”





“Hey now,” said a rumbling voice. Marie looked up. It was Scat Cat!

“Say, Duchess, it is my birthday,” Scat Cat said, “and Marie’s my friend. How about letting her stay?” Scat Cat leaned over toward the birthday cake on the table. “It’s my birthday wish!” he said. Then he blew out all the candles and winked at Marie. She smiled back.

Duchess sighed, looking closely at Marie and Scat Cat.

“Well, just this once, I suppose. But you are going to bed early tomorrow night, Marie. Understood?”

Marie nodded happily. “Thank you, Mama! I promise I’ll never sneak out again.”





So Marie stayed at the party, singing and dancing and talking with the grown-ups. Finally, it was time for everyone

to go home. Marie was as sleepy as she had ever been. As

Duchess carried her up to bed, Marie heard Scat Cat call, "Thanks for coming to my party, Marie!"

"Happy birthday, Scat Cat!" Marie called back. "Thank you for the dance!"

Marie couldn't stop smiling as Duchess tucked her back into bed with her brothers. She would never forget her special night and Scat Cat's birthday wish!











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